



Seeking Security

Ruth 3

1. The Problem (verse 1)
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One of the great difficulties in interpreting the Bible is the vast cultural divide that exists between us and the characters of the Bible. Let's face it, we live in an entirely different world than those in Bible times. And there are some things that are just plain difficult to understand, because we live in a different culture, and we don't have full information about the culture in which they lived. The geography of the land was different than our geography. They had mountains and hills and deserts. We live in the prairie. Their occupations were different than our occupations. We don't have Hewers of Wood or Drawers of Water in our day. Their food was different than our food. They had no pasteurization or refrigeration or purification, so they had to drink liquids that wouldn't spoil. Their measures and money were different than ours. They dealt in shekels and drachmas. They measured in ephahs and talents. Their clothing was different than our clothing. They wore tunics and robes, which we don't today. Their government was different than our government. There were times when they were ruled by judges or kings or tyrants. They traveled differently than we traveled. They traveled by donkey and camel, while we travel by planes and automobiles today. They viewed medicine and sickness differently than we do today. They knew nothing of bacteria and viruses. Their sanitary practices were different than ours. They had no running water or indoor plumbing.

The good news is that the human heart hasn't changed. So, much of what the Bible speaks about still applies to us today. Now, for the most part, such differences are easily understood with a basic knowledge of ancient history. And, the point of the Biblical text is often very clear, even without a full understanding of the customs of the day. For instance, take Psalm 133, ...

Psalm 133

Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brother to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever.

In this Psalm, we read of the blessing that comes when brothers walk in unity. It's a great blessing. The opposite is the case as well. "Behold, how awful and terrible it is for brothers to live in friction with each other." Then, come two comparisons, two similes. It is like precious oil coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard. It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion.

These images speak more to the original readers than they do to us. Apart from a bit of historical background, we don't know anything about oil coming down upon Aaron's beard; we don't know anything about the dew of Hermon. But, the good news is this: in many ways, you don't have to know all about these things in order to catch a proper interpretation of this passage. All you need to know is that the oil upon the head is good and happy thing and that the dew of Hermon coming down upon Zion is a good and happy thing. At the end of the day, Psalm 133 is speaking of the happiness and joy and blessing that one experiences when enjoying brotherly unity.

You can easily pick that up from verse 1. Brotherly unity is called a good and pleasant thing. You can also pick it up from the examples provided. It's like the oil upon Aaron's beard. It's like the dew of Hermon coming down upon Zion. Now, the more you know about the oil upon the head of the high priest, Aaron, the more you will come to appreciate how pleasant the unity is. And, the more you know about the ice caps of Mount Hermon melting and coming down in to the Sea of Galilee, to provide life for the people of Israel during the dry, summer months, the more you will come to appreciate how pleasant the unity of brothers is.

Now, I say all of that to say this. As we come this morning to the third chapter of Ruth, we will feel the weight of distance between us and the days of the judges when Ruth lived. There are some things that will take place in this chapter that are downright strange to us. We aren't in the culture of the day. We don't live like they lived. Furthermore, some of these cultural customs are mysteries even to scholars who study ancient near-Eastern culture. In other words, when it comes to some of the customs of the day, we don't fully know exactly what's going on in the book of Ruth. They remain a mystery to us. However, having said that, hope is not lost. We can still arrive at the main point without much difficulty. It's merely that some of the details are a bit difficult to know with precision.

The book of Ruth contains several summary statements. The first comes at the end of chapter 1, ...

Ruth 1:22

So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Because of a famine in Bethlehem, Naomi had gone to Moab with her husband, Elimelech, and her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. But, within a decade, Naomi's husband and two sons died. And so, Naomi returned to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law, Ruth. Indeed, those were "dark days" for Naomi.

The second summary statement comes at the end of chapter 2, ...

Ruth 2:23

So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth has found favor in the sight of a man named Boaz. Not only has he allowed her to glean in his fields, he has also protected her in the process. He told the workers not to touch her (2:9). He told Ruth that she could come and drink from the same water from which his servants drink (2:9). He told the workers not to insult her (2:15). He even told the workers to set some of the bundles of grain in her path, so that the work would be easy for her (2:16). At the end of chapter 2, we find Ruth and Naomi enjoying the favor of Boaz.

Her favor lasted some a couple of months from the barley harvest, beginning in mid-April, to the wheat harvest, which would carry through mid-June. It was somewhere around two months of favor. Indeed, these were "good days" for Ruth and Naomi.

But, as well as they were being cared for, it was only for a season. With all that Ruth had gleaned during the barley harvest, and with all that Ruth had gleaned during the wheat harvest, it might keep them for only a few months or perhaps, even as long as a year. But, Ruth and Naomi needed a long-term solution to preserve their lives. Ruth and Naomi were two vulnerable women lacking a future. This is especially the case with Ruth. Ruth could care for Naomi. But, 30 years later, who would care for Ruth? She has no child; she has no heir. She has no one to take care of her.

Sure, they could continue on year by year for a little bit. But, eventually, Ruth would be by herself, in her old age. Furthermore, they couldn't live year by year, presuming upon the bounty of the harvest next year. Nor could they live presuming upon the kindness of Boaz. They needed security; not just for this year, but for next year and the year after that and the year after that.

And that's the context to which we arrive in chapter 3. And Naomi has a plan. Let me read through our text, ...

Ruth 3

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do."

She said to her, "All that you say I will do." So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.

When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.

He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a kinsman redeemer."

Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence. Now it is true I am a kinsman redeemer; however, there is a kinsman redeemer closer than I. Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning."

So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her. She said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

My first point is simply this:

1. The Problem (verse 1)

In verse 1, Naomi acknowledges the dilemma in which Ruth finds herself (which is really the dilemma of both of them).

Ruth 3:1

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"

Naomi knew that in the book of Genesis, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). And so, God created a "helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). The principle is this: we are social creatures who need each other. Solomon wrote the same thing in Ecclesiastes 4:9 and 10, "Two are better than one. ... If either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion." Paul would say years later, "I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach" (1 Tim. 5:14).

This has always been Naomi's heart toward Ruth. Do you remember back in chapter 1, when Naomi urged Ruth and Orpah to stay on in Moab, because there, they might find a husband? This is what Naomi says. "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?" Literally, she says, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for you?" This is exactly what she said back in chapter 1 to Ruth and Orpah. Her tune hasn't changed. She has always been eager to seek for Ruth's safety. Ruth 1:9 says, "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." The picture here is of a restful security in the provision of another - a husband and children.

Really, when you think about it, this is what they needed. They needed security. They needed help for the future. They needed the peace that comes with a provider. And it wasn't going to be found in themselves. It was going to be found in another, who would come alongside them and provide for them, providing security and sustenance.

As the story unfolds, we see that it will be found in Boaz, who is identified here in the text as a "close relative" in the New American Standard. In fact, this word is used some 8 times in chapters 3 and 4. Look back at chapter 2, verse 20: "Again Naomi said to her, 'The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.'" This word translated here, "closest relative" is related to the word, "Redeem," which is found 11 times in chapters 3 and 4.

So, a better way to translate this is with the word "redeemer" (like some of your translations do). Boaz is one of our "Redeemers" (as the ESV says) Or, He is one of our "Kinsman-redeemers" (as the NIV says). Personally, I like this translation the best. That is, he is one of our relatives who is capable of purchasing us with a price. Indeed, this is the key word and key thought of the entire book of Ruth. This is where the book is headed - to show this point - is that Ruth and Naomi were helpless individuals. They needed help from another. Boaz will come and "Redeem" them. That is, he will claim them; he will purchase them; he will provide for them.

Many commentators have given the three basic requirements for anyone to be a kinsman-redeemer.

1. First of all, a kinsman-redeemer needs to be a relative. They need to share the same blood. A man from another tribe may redeem you, but he wouldn't apply for being a kinsman-redeemer.
2. Second, a kinsman-redeemer needs to be able to redeem. That is, he must have the required resources to redeem. You can't redeem if you don't have the resources.
3. Third, a kinsman-redeemer needs to be willing to redeem. That is, he must be willing to allocate his resources toward this act of benevolence. [\[1\]](#)

And it is right here that we see great application to us this morning. The dilemma of these two women is really the dilemma that we all face in life. We, too, need security. We, too, need rest. It's not merely help for a single day that we need. It's not merely help for a few seasons that we need. Nor is it merely help for our brief lives upon the earth. No, we need help for our eternity. We need a kinsman-redeemer to redeem us and purchase us. He needs to be a relative. He needs to be able to redeem. He needs to be willing to redeem.

All of these requirements are found in Jesus Christ, our true redeemer. He is our relative in that He took on flesh and blood. Hebrews 2:14 says, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same. He is able to redeem in that He is the heir of all things. Jesus said, 'All things that the Father has are Mine' (John 16:15). He has infinite resources at His disposal. He is willing to redeem, and showed His willingness on the cross. Jesus said, 'I lay down my life for the sheep. ... No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative' (John 10:15, 18).

The whole reason why Jesus came was to redeem us from our sins. Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Galatians 4:4-5 tells us, "God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law." We who believe in Jesus Christ have "redemption" through the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Peter says it this way, "You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

In many ways, this is one of the purposes of the book of Ruth. It gives us a picture of our redemption in Jesus. And this is the picture of our text this morning. So, as we continue to track through the book of Ruth this morning, and as we see Boaz redeeming Ruth, let us remember that it is a picture of our redemption in Jesus Christ.

Anyway, here's Naomi's plan. This is my second point, ...

2. The Plan (verses 2-5)

It comes in verse 2, ...

Ruth 3:2-4

"Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do."

It's here that we see one of those cases where it is difficult to know what's going on culturally. At first blush, it sounds a bit on the edge. Ruth is supposed to wash up, and to put on some nice clothes, and to put on some nice smelling perfume, and then--after Boaz has enjoyed the feast of the harvest and is merry with food and drink (verse 3, 7)--to go to Boaz, lift his covers and lie down with Boaz. Furthermore, this is supposed to be under the cover of night. It's not out in the open for all to see. No, it's to be hidden from the eyes of others.

With no accountability of any kind, the "woman" is to make herself attractive and lie down with "the man" (verse 3, 14). In a day when everyone did what was right in their own eyes, this could easily end up as an occasion for immorality. This has all of the trappings of danger associated with it. People of the Old Testament could be stoned for such things. Astonishingly, Ruth says to Naomi in verse 5, "All that you say I will do."

Now, I wish that I could tell you that we knew of some sort of cultural practice for such a thing as lifting up the covers and lying down at the feet of another. But, we don't have anything. We can't pull up some other ancient near-eastern document that describes a similar situation. All we can do is read on and seek to discern what this means. Apparently, it's a sort of marriage proposal. We can imagine that Ruth might have been on her way singing, "Going to the threshing floor and I'm gonna get married..."

That's my third point,
3. The Proposal (verses 6-11)

Ruth 3:6-7

So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

You have to love the obedience of Ruth. She "did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her" (verse 6). She washed herself. She made herself smell nice. She put on her finest clothes. She watched Boaz carefully at the feast. She noted where it was that he lay down. She approached him (without him noticing), uncovered his feet, and lay down.

And it looks like she came to him after he was asleep. Because, it was only later that he was startled and noticed Ruth lying at his feet, ...

Ruth 3:8-9

It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a kinsman redeemer."

Now, there is a lot going on in what she says here. First of all, she identifies herself as a maid of Boaz. This hints at the previous kindness that Ruth experienced at the hands of Boaz. As she returned to the field everyday to glean, she really wasn't a gleaner in the field. Rather, she was a worker in the field (see Ruth 3:2).

Second, Ruth is being romantic here. Her words bring us back to the first time that she met Boaz. He told her back in 2:12, "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." The word translated "wings" is translated "covering" in verse 9. In essence, Ruth was saying, "Do you remember when we first met? I do. I remember that you pointed out that I had come to Israel, seeking refuge under the wings of God. Indeed I had. Well, I want to seek refuge under His wings by seeking refuge under your wings. So, spread your 'wings' over me."

It's a bit like the man, who plans to propose to his girlfriend. He does so by taking her to the place where they had their very first date. And in the process of dinner, he reminds her of that event, showing that she has made an impact upon his life. It's the same here with Ruth. She brings his mind back to the first time they met. I don't think that the subtlety of Ruth's language was lost on Boaz. Who seemed to know instantly what she was asking for.

The third observation from this verse is that this request is a request for redemption: "You are a kinsman-redeemer." That is, it's a request for Boaz to "purchase" Ruth. It's a request for her to find her "security" in Boaz (verse 1). It's a request for her to find "rest" in Boaz (verse 1). In this way, it's a sort of marriage proposal. But, it appears to be more than that. [\[2\]](#)

Now, again, we come to one of those difficult portions of the book when a thorough knowledge of the culture would be nice for us to have. But we don't have any sort of hard knowledge about these things. Ruth appears to be claiming an application of the practice of levirate marriage--when a man was required to marry the widow of his deceased brother (Deut. 25:5-6). However, that law would have required Boaz to marry Naomi, not Ruth. So, that's not quite it. But, it appears to be close. But, also (as we shall see), the request appears to bring with it a request for financial help and future security. Somehow, Boaz was to "purchase" Ruth. That's the idea of "redemption" that comes in this verse. It's hard for us to fully understand what exactly this request was. But, don't be discouraged, the text is sufficient. In the response of Boaz, we see him explaining exactly what Ruth was requesting. He says, ...

Ruth 3:10-11

... "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. "Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

With this response, we get a bit of insight into the integrity of Boaz. Here it is, in the middle of the night, with a woman lying at his feet after an evening of merrymaking at the harvest! Boaz could have easily taken advantage of her in many different ways. He could have approached her sexually, but, he didn't. Instead, he deals with her honorably. Such is the character of this man, Boaz. Thereby, he is a shadow of Christ. Let's walk through His response.

First of all, Boaz honors Ruth for choosing Boaz, rather than any of the younger men that she may have pursued instead. Such a statement is intended to do more than tell us that there is an age difference between Boaz and Ruth. It's to say that Ruth wasn't seeking a man who could "wow" her on the outside. Rather, Ruth was looking for the man of integrity, even if he was a bit older than she was. Such was Boaz. Boaz also honors her by mentioning that she is "a woman of excellence" (verse 11). Literally, she is a "woman of strength."

It is not by accident that Boaz is also identified as a "man of strength" (2:1). It's as if the author wants for us to know that this is a match made in heaven. These two are made for one another. Boaz knew this about her, even before they had met. I trust that you remember the conversation in the field that Boaz had with his servants, "Whose young woman is this?" (2:5). "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab" (2:6). Boaz had heard of her long before he had seen her. His feelings toward her were pre-disposed to be positive. Please note here that the impression that Ruth wasn't merely made on him. She made an impression on others as well. Note here how it's not so much that Boaz is saying that she is "a woman of excellence." Rather, it's that all the city knows that she is a "woman of excellence."

Having said these things, he pledges to do all that is in his power to redeem her. But, there is a problem: My fourth point, ...

4. The Problem (verses 12)

Yes, Boaz is a relative. Yes, Boaz is able to redeem her. Yes, Boaz is willing to redeem her. But, Boaz isn't the first in line to redeem Ruth. There is another relative that is a closer relative than Boaz, who needs to be given the first opportunity to redeem Ruth (verses 12-13).

Ruth 3:12

"Now it is true I am a kinsman-redeemer; however, there is a kinsman-redeemer closer than I.

His quick response showed that Boaz had thought about this long before Ruth ever approached him that night. You can't say these things in the deep of the night, just after being awakened, unless you have previously thought about such things.

I do believe that this shows his integrity. To be sure, Boaz had feelings for Ruth. But, due to the age difference, he wasn't going to pursue this younger woman. What would people say? Rather, she was the one who had to take the initiative for this to work. Furthermore, in his integrity, Boaz couldn't merely take Ruth to be his wife, without first giving this other kinsman-redeemer an opportunity to redeem Ruth. How hard is this! You love a woman and have to defer to another before you marry her!

And it's right here that we see that it's not quite like a marriage proposal we have in our day. If that were the case, then Boaz might merely be able to say, "Yes, I will marry you." But, there is something else going on here, in that Boaz needs to give deference to this other relative, who is more closely related to Naomi than he is. But, Boaz pledges to do what He can to redeem Ruth. And so, we come to my last point this morning, ...

5. The Plan (verses 13-18)

Boaz has a plan.

Ruth 3:13

"Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning."

And then - I love it - he takes her under his wings, and spends the rest of the night with her at his feet. Such an action was very symbolic for Boaz. Ruth had come to Israel seeking refuge under God's wings (2:12). And now, even in the uncertainty of the next day, Boaz was extending his wings to give her the security that she was seeking. The story continues in verse 14, ...

Ruth 3:14-15

So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." Again he said, "Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

Again, we see Boaz protecting Ruth by protecting her honor. He makes sure that she arrives at home before anyone recognizes her. But, rather than going home empty he gives her some barley - six measures. We don't know how much this is, but most guess that it was somewhere around 60 pounds of barley.

Now, let's picture the scene from Naomi's perspective. She had sent Ruth off into the night, and she didn't return home until dawn. Naomi

had no idea what was taking place. Did the plans go well? Did the plans go astray? My guess is that she was like the worried parent whose child didn't come home that evening. I know that many a parent has had sleepless nights when their child didn't come home until later. But, as dawn was breaking, Ruth walks into their home with a load of barley on her back, reminiscent of the first time that she had gone to the field to glean. And so, we pick it up in verse 16, ...

Ruth 3:16-17

When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her. She said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

With such words, Boaz would have drawn Naomi back to the dark days of chapter 1. Ruth had gone to Moab "full," but came back "empty." But now, Ruth had gone to Boaz "empty," but came back "full." "Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed." What a picture of the way that God was providing for Ruth and Naomi.

In many ways, the six measures of barley was a way for Boaz to say that he was willing to execute the plan. However, the good news came with some bad news. There was another, who was first in line to redeem, not Boaz. But, Naomi knew the character of Boaz,

Ruth 3:18

Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today."

I would love to go on into chapter 4 this morning, but, for the sake of time, we really need to stop here, as continuing on wouldn't do justice to the riches we find in chapter 4. So, let me wrap up my message like this. Have you sought security for your life? Have you sought for a redeemer in your life? Have you sought for someone to wash your sins away?

Think of the extent to which Ruth extended herself in seeking a redeemer. She put it all on the line. She put herself at a point of great vulnerability. She placed all of her hope in Boaz. And what did she find? She found an honorable man, who treated her with dignity and respect. And I'll tell you, if you seek Jesus, you will find him more honorable than Boaz. Like Boaz, Jesus is willing and able to redeem you. So, trust in Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 24, 2010 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] MacArthur Bible Commentary, pp. 292.

[2] I feel compelled to comment here by way of footnote. This really has nothing to do with the text of Ruth, but everything to do with the cultural context of our day, and especially of the context of our church. Our church is filled with many homeschoolers. Now, this isn't entirely the case (for which I praise God), but it definitely is the majority. With such a demographic, we bring certain dangers. One of them has to do with the entire discussion of our children's dating habits.

In the homeschool movement, there is a strong emphasis upon "courtship" before marriage. That is, the strong involvement of the parents (and family) in the process of selecting a mate and the process of affirming this or not. Now, there are many, many positives to this approach (as it helps to protect against immorality and it helps to provide a healthy start to marriage). Furthermore, my wife and I intend (by God's grace) to be very involved in the selection and affirmation of future husbands and wives of our children. However, there are some dangers as well, one of which I want to point out here.

Often the "courtship" model, is often portrayed as the only "Biblical" approach, as if there are no other options. Furthermore, there is often a strong emphasis upon male leadership (which I find very healthy and very good). But, often it comes to the point of almost entire passivity on the part of the gal. I merely want to point out here that Ruth is the aggressor pursuing Boaz (and not the other way around). Her pursuit of Boaz is a bit like a Sadie Hawkins dance, where it is the girl who asks the guy to attend the dance (for a change). It's a bit like my parents, in which my mother was really the one who proposed to my father. I don't fully know the story. All I know is that my mother once said to my father, "So Stan, when are we going to get married?" The rest, may I say, is history.

Anyway, I feel compelled here to point out that any "Biblical" approach to dating and courtship and marriage must take into account this story of Ruth, where Ruth is essentially asking Boaz for his hand in marriage. Such may be an anomaly. I admit that. Furthermore, I believe that women asking men to marriage ought to remain the minority position, as it gives men the opportunity to exert their headship role in marriage. However, I do not believe that a woman's initiation should be prohibited. Nor should a woman be required merely to wait passively by for someone to come and initiate everything for her regarding a future marriage. Ruth compels us to be balanced in any "courtship" teaching that may come around.